**OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF EL DORADO NATURE CENTER FRIENDS & VOLUNTEERS** 

### **New Stream - New Look**



City officials and staff along with volunteers and the public attended the stream ribbon cutting ceremony on March 20. Attendees included City Manager Pat West (back left); Sharon Gates, PR&M Planning and Development; Drew Satariano, Parks and Recreation Commission President; and 4th District Councilman Patrick O'Donnell.

After many months of disruption and major reconstruction of the Nature Center's stream, snowy egrets, red-eared slider turtles, large mouth bass, and a wading Cooper's hawk stalk, bask, swim and, some might say, joyfully cavort in our new, fast-flowing stream. Now that the canopy of invasive shrubs and trees has been removed, sunlight brightens the stream-side trails. Mallards fly back and forth overhead following the contours of the stream, sweeping down for skidding touchdowns on the stream surface, only to waddle up its banks, nibble on a creek monkey flower and take flight again. The towering California sycamores, once hidden from visitors' view by the thickets of privet, Brazilian pepper and other non-native plants are silhouetted in the bright blue sky. Western Swallowtail butter-flies drift through the open

tree canopy and black crowned phoebes nab insects passing by and return to their favorite perch.

The ambitious project to revitalize a slow and murky stream, entailed creating temporary dams on each lake, draining the stream, relocating fish, turtles, and as many other critters as could be scooped up. Vegetation was cleared to allow construction crews access to the stream-bed but also to make way for a healthy California riparian native plant community. Careful culling of nonnative material from along the stream banks and corridor revealed numerous mature native plants and trees such as Coast live oak, California sycamore, black willow. Some of these trees had been completely hidden from view and would have eventually continued on page 2 ...

## The Spirit of Transformation

Change is the constant, the signal for rebirth, the egg of the phoenix"

— Christina Baldwin

Change has always been weird for me. I can change my hairstyle monthly and get a new burst of youthful energy. I change my grocery store and find new bargains on what my family needs. But if there's a SigAlert on the freeway and my commute is altered, or my husband comes home to say his job is moving 20 miles away, it feels as though my world is falling apart. But, is it? Unfortunately, the effect is often that I'm angry, stressed and usually take it out on other people.

Some things in our lives become so routine that we forget that anything can happen. But we need to remember that change usually occurs for a reason. The fun part about it is discovering whether or not it's good. And, if you feel it's not good, how do you make it better? How do you, as they say, turn lemons into lemonade?

Back to that SigAlert on the 22 Freeway last week—I had to take a I 0-mile detour to get to work. Normally, that would have started a bad-mood chain-reaction for the day. But because of that change in my routine—one I did not like—I discovered that a friend of mine from school worked only a mile away from the Nature Center. The outcome: we had lunch two days later, and I had lemonade.

— Meaghan O'Neill

## **VOLUNTEER NEWS**

#### **Hooray for Our Volunteers!**

In these challenging economic times, we at El Dorado Nature Center are especially grateful to all our wonderful volunteers for their dedication and hard work. We feel the support of our volunteer community and would not be able to provide all of our services without them.

#### Moveable Museum

Our Movable Museum volunteers continue to reach out to schools throughout Long Beach with *Protect our Watery World* which focuses on marine life and the effects of pollution, and *Acorns Sea and Sage* which brings the life of the Tongva Indians to the classroom. Our sincere gratitude to **Lou Schumow**, **Ray Ramos** and **Mary Stebbins** for their hard work and commitment to keeping this program available.

#### Sharing Nature in the City

Welcome to our new Sharing Nature volunteers who joined our ranks in January: Jean Caldwell, Charlene Hutchins, and Cindy Nakai. New and experienced volunteers continue to interact with patrons on the trail about Nature Center in-



New SNIC volunteers Charlene Hutchins and Jean Caldwell and EDNC staffer Kristyn Bender.



Sharing Nature in the City Volunteer Melanie Smith and her husband Craig volunteered their time to share about Nature Center programs at a Girl Scout event.

environmental education events. During the springtime, dozens of requests are received for the Nature Center to have a table at an event and we would not be able to accommodate most of them without volunteer participation. Vol-unteers have shared with patrons about nature, sustainability and programs at events in San Pedro, at the LA Botanical Gardens and The Aguarium of the Pacific, for the YMCA and the City of Long Beach as well as others. Our education volunteers are a vital part of outreach not only to patrons on the trail, but to the larger community. Thank you to our dedicated volunteers: Chris Beck, Lu and John Bowden, Linda Diaz, Thais Edmonds, Mary Esposito, Paul Kiley, Mary Stebbins, Ray Ramos, Ron Sievers, Melanie and Smith, Hank Warzybok and Maria Zawacki.

habitants. In addition, SNIC volunteers go

off-site to educate the public at fairs and

#### Trail Stewards

Thank you to all the Trail Stewards who spend their time helping patrons on the trail.

Recently, a gathering of Trail Stewards walked the newly opened I-mile trail and discussed customer service on the trails as well as new elements of topography. Trail Stewards' participation is crucial in helping patrons understand about the on-going stream restoration and how best to stay safe on the trails. Some topics of the meeting included reporting procedures, information on native plantings, bridges, as well as gentleness in helping visitors who may find themselves disoriented and wander off trail.

Thank you to the following Trail Stewards for being the eyes and the ears of the Nature Center: Theresa Alletto, Dee Barnard, Judith Blatchford, Jeremy Blatchford, Diana Chiang, Linda Diaz, Thais Edmonds, Dorothy Geisler, Paul Kiley, Nancy Kimes, Al Kimura, Steve Liivoja, Craig Matheny, Adam Morales, Damon Nixon, Gloria Potocki, Lou Schumow, Melani and Craig Smith, Mary Stebbins, Francis Tomich, Lee Warren, and Steve Witt.

### New Stream, New Look

... continued from page I

tually been choked out by the vigorous pepper trees and privets competing for nutrients, water and sunlight.

Next came the grading and dredging to remove 40 years of silt that had accumulated. Finally, the new bridges of weathered steel were positioned over concrete footings. After touch-up grading and shaping of the trails at each bridge was completed, the stream was re-watered and began to flow again from the north lake to the south lake.

The ribbon cutting ceremony on March 20, with volunteers, friends, public officials and patrons in attendance marked the ending of the first phase of the project and the beginning of the next phase. Since that last shovel of soil was relocated and the fifth new bridge installed, hundreds of new plants have been added to the stream banks and edges.

To stabilize and prevent erosion of the newly graded banks, willow stakes and sticks (cut live branches) were stuck in the moist banks, and other riparian plants have been added. Now flowering creek monkey flower with buttery yellow flowers dapple the edges along with aromatic mugwort, rushes and native grasses. Many more plants will be added over the next few months as Nature Center volunteers and staff work to implement this long awaited plan.

Your membership and donations to Friends of El Dorado Nature have been critical in providing the funding for the completion of this important project. We thank everyone for their generosity. We hope that you will continue to consider Friends for your charitable donations so we can continue the restoration of the stream habitat.

Please come visit, take a photo, share with the kids and grandkids, or even join one of the ongoing work parties.

Hope to see you on the trail!

— Donnie Haigh

## **Habitat Stewards**

Habitat Stewards have been hard at work at the Nature Center this season. They finished planting the new wildflowergrassland meadow for the year. Several varieties of native grasses were installed with wire cages to keep rabbits and ground squirrels away as much as possible. In this habitat you'll see Deer Grass, Coast Melic, Purple Needle Grass, Blue-eyed Grass, Blue Dicks, California Aster, California Goldenrod, Blue Gramma, and a variety of annual wildflowers. These provide food, shelter and space for many in the intricate web of life, which includes underground dwellers-gophers, snakes and rabbits-foragers-towhees and song sparrows-to predators and scavengers such as hawks and turkey vultures. More grasses will be planted next season.

More recently, the Stewards have been concentrating on restoring and stabilizing the stream banks with native vegetation, which will also increase its habitat value. The focus has been on planting right at the waterline. Species such as Creek Monkey Flower with bright yellow flowers and red dots, Fiber Optics Grass, Sedges, Black Willow, Sandbar Willow, Bur Marigold, Marsh Fleabane and more, appreciate "wet feet" and won't need artificial irrigation. Higher



Brent Devol, Suzanne Werzer and Tom Fowler busy with restoration planting.

up the banks the Stewards will plant Arroyo Willows, Red Willows, Mule Fat, Coast Range Melic Grass, Pacific Coast Irises, Fuchsia-flowering Gooseberry, Western Redbud, False Indigo, Asters, Deer Grass, Cottonwood, California Mint and more. Because these require watering, many will wait until the next rainy/cooler season to be installed. This project will be ongoing for some time, but our Stewards are hard at work, sometimes spending their whole planting time shin-deep in the stream to have the right angle for planting.

As time progresses, you should be able to note subtle changes along the stream as the plants are added and grow. Be sure to watch for progress and note the changes of the seasons and how the wildlife uses the various plants. Willows are habitat to many native insects, including several species of butterflies and moths as well as birds. False Indigo is the larval host plant for the California State Insect, the California Dogface. Monkeyflower serves the Common Buckeye and Variable Checkerspot butterflies. Gooseberry is a favorite of hummingbirds with its drooping red tubular blooms, which then give way to delicious berries that other birds relish. And, as you walk the stream try to notice other relationships between the flora and fauna of the Nature Center.

Many thanks for all the hard work of our dedicated Habitat Stewards: Margaret Brandt, Linda Bryan-Thompson, Brent Devol, Tom Fowler, Nancy Hagthrop, Shirley Hansen, Harry Hatanaka, Elena Holcomb, Lynne Horn, Al Kimura, Caroline Klund, Kerry Martin, Rick Nolan, Robert O'Connor, Deidra Sanard, Don Scales, Ron Sievers, Jo Ann Smith, and Suzanne Wurzer.

## **Spring Sings!**

In Springtime, as the Nature Center comes alive with activity, it is an especially exciting and tumultuous time in the lives of birds. Hummingbirds dive in elaborate displays, Ravens carry sticks to sturdy their nests, Mallards search for well-camouflaged cover in the undergrowth, and hawks call and soar above the canopy. They claim territory, breed, nest and rear their young. Only the continuation of the species is at stake and birds go through great lengths to ensure the success of the next generation.

One of the most amazing and noticeable aspects of the avian breeding season is the singing. Birds can make many sounds, but singing is reserved for this time of year and can have several meanings. Interestingly, as beautiful as it sounds to us, bird's songs are not necessarily meant to be romantic. Males generally do the singing and initially use it as a signal to other male birds that they have chosen a territory. "This spot is taken" isn't exactly the most tender interpretation of a melodic bird song, but it is an

important part of the process. Of course, songs are also used to attract a mate. Males sing and sing until a female accepts the invitation. Singing isn't the only strategy used to attract females, however. Colorful feathers and behavioral displays also show the health and vigor of a male; qualities female birds notice in choosing a suitable partner.

All birds are amazing in their own way,



The Least Bittern

but one bird that breeds and nests at the Nature Center is of special importance. The Least Bittern is a small heron that lives in the reeds along the edges of the pond. They are secretive, stealthy hunters, eating small fish, frogs and other aquatic invertebrates. Federal law protects all bird species at the Nature Center, especially during nesting season, and several migrants, such as the California Least Tern and Least Bells Vireo. have even had State/Federal Endangered or Threatened status. However, generally speaking, none of our resident birds carry any major significance in terms of protection, except the Least Bittern. It is considered a California Species of Special Concern (SSC) by the California Department of Fish and Game. Although this title has no true legal ramifications, it is a universally accepted protection status that can be used in defining critical habitat. SSC designates certain birds (74 to be exact) as having special cause for monitoring and attention

continued on page 4 ...



## **Keeping Long Beach Clean**



El Dorado Nature Center's aquatic stewardship outreach programs give youth and adults a chance to take an active role in helping the environment--starting with their own community. Monthly wetland and beach cleanups as well as the thriving Adopt-A-Beach Program offer an opportunity to learn more about the unique, fragile coastal aquatic habitats that we may otherwise take for granted.

The Adopt-A-Wetland program is offered to the public every 3rd Saturday of the month at Golden Shore Marine Biological Reserve. This small, 6.4-acre tidal wetland at the mouth of the Los Angeles River is home to a diverse community of native wetland plants and wildlife. However, its health

has been threatened by a steady inundation of trash. Plastic, glass, Styrofoam, paper, cigarette butts and anything else you can imagine end up there; washed down from upriver communities and local storm drains. Each month, more than 50 participants volunteer their time and energy to clean the wetland and their dedication has led to a much healthier habitat. Also, in the 2009/10 school year, more than 15 high school students have been involved in a service learning project at the wetland that dovetails wetland education, class-room learning and active participation. At the end of this 6-month program, students create an action plan for stewardship and receive community service hours.

In addition to the monthly wetland cleanup, El Dorado Nature Center's popular beach cleanup programs are vital to helping keep our coastline free of debris. In 2009 alone, more that 6500 people participated in the Adopt-a-Beach program and right now more that 30 groups have committed to cleaning some portion of 4 miles between Alamitos Beach and the Peninsula. In addition, the Nature Center now holds a monthly beach cleanup on the 4th Saturday of the month next to the Belmont Pier.

We applaud the dedication of those in the Long Beach community who recognize that taking an active role in keeping our aquatic habitats clean and healthy is a vital need and a benefit to us all.

## The Great Backyard Bird Count

From herons, hawks and hummers, to warblers, wrens and waxwings, this year's Great Backyard Bird Count was a resounding success. This annual event, sponsored by the Cornwell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, gives bird watchers of all skill levels an opportunity to participate in an important bird conservation effort. Citizen involvement is essential for scientists who study birds and the GBBC is an effective way for ornithologists to collect, on a large scale, data that may otherwise be difficult to obtain. Luckily for us ordinary folks, they make it fun and easy! They rely on input from members of the public to help them track bird population numbers,

note changes in migration patterns, and define issues affecting bird habitat.

Every second weekend in February, all you have to do is count the birds that come to your backyard or neighborhood and then enter the data online. You can count all day or for just fifteen minutes; any information you gather really helps. Detailed results are made available almost immediately so you can see how your input is making a difference. The website, www.birdcount.org, is easy to navigate and has all kinds of interesting features to explore. You can compare and contrast results from different years, see maps with various sighting locations and check out great pictures in the photo

gallery. It is definitely a site to see.

The Nature Center hosted a GBBC event so visitors could get involved and help count birds on the trails. Lots of excellent sightings were reported including a flock of Cedar Waxwings and a soaring Red-shouldered Hawk. The website shows that 3,019 birds were counted for all of Long Beach. That's 64 different species! It was truly a great event, and a great opportunity to help conserve our feathered

### **Spring Sings!**

... continued from page 3

based on contributing factors such as habitat loss or population decline. This specification can also lead to possible qualification as a State Endangered or Threatened species. You can find out more about what it means to be a Species of Special Concern, including the Species Account for SSC status for the Least Bittern at the CA Dept. of Fish and Game website, www.dfg.ca.gov.

These are just a couple of reminders why the Nature Center is such a special place. We invite you to come out and enjoy the sights and sounds of bird nesting season, but please remember to respect their space. We want to cherish and protect, for generations to come, this important habitat for all wildlife!

## Naturalist Notes

**Maureen Adler,** Naturalist and Front Counter staff, lead a group on a night walk recently and we thought her account of the evening's events was worth sharing:

We didn't see owls or bats-but a few of us did see our Gray Ghost of the Woods, Mr. Coyote himself. He/she was in the pine woods at the extreme southern part of the Nature Center. We had headed south after leaving the Salyer road area, bypassed the restroom service road, continuing backwards on the 2-mile trail. As soon as we rounded the turn and went up the incline heading west, there he was, about 300 feet away, in the gloom of late evening. No one saw him but myself that first time, and I

went back along the line cautioning the folks that there was a coyote up ahead. The large group was very quiet the whole time. We continued-the animal having blended into the darkness-and just as the trail began to curve towards the restroom, there he was again, (at least it was the same size animal and in the same vicinity) and this time the people in the front of the line did see the coyote. While we often hear these canines showing off their vocal abilities by howling, yipping, barking, and yodeling, I've never thought much about how silently they move around, more silently that the silly rabbits, who seem to only have two speeds: frozen and pedal to the metal.

I know-big deal. But it is a big deal.



Thank you to all of our new Friends who have joined since November 2009. Your generous contributions help to make El Dorado Nature Center a place for education and recreation like no other.

#### SUN

Mia Lipski

#### **RED SHOULDERED HAWK**

Bill Viola Robert Ruderman

#### **RED EARED SLIDER**

Eileen Klink Tom Fowler

#### **BUTTERFLY**

Long Beach Garden Club Lisa Noble

#### **ACORN**

Dane Downing Shirley Hoppes George Lux

A special thank you to Jared Walters, Boy Scouts of America Troop 650, for choosing El Dorado Nature Center for his Eagle Scout project and the donation of our new walkway display board.

Help enhance the habitat and the excellent educational programs you love by renewing your membership in Friends of El Dorado Nature Center. Your support is essential. Make a difference in your community by joining today!

For more information (562) 570-4935

# Nature Center Honored by Returning Teachers

Throughout its history, the Nature Center has been a field trip destination for thousands of students from all over Southern California each year. Our name is synonymous with excellence in the area of exploratory and nature-based education. Many teachers re-



turn with their classes year after year. However, because of budget reductions many teachers are forced to cut their field trips down to only one, which is often paid for by parents, grants, or through fundraising. It has recently come to our attention that teachers are choosing the Nature Center as their one outing for the year. We feel so privileged and honored that teachers are selecting to have their field trip at the Nature Center, but also glad that students get to have an unforgettable experience immersed in nature. It is with gratitude to those schools, administrators, parents, teachers and others that we continue to strive to provide superior educational programming to the community.

## **Summer Concerts Return to Nature Center**

Back by popular demand, El Dorado Na-ture Center will again be hosting summer concerts in July and August. Bring your family and friends to enjoy a variety of styles and sounds.

On **July 1**, don't miss Steelparade, a musical explosion of calypso, funk



and rock with steel drums. On **July 15**, we'll be charmed by the rockin' music of the multi-talented *Jennifer Corday*. **August 5** brings the return of *Sligo Rags*, a celtic folk band with a bluegrass attitude. And, on **August 19**, don't miss *Allensworth* (shown above) as they bring the sounds of soul to the Nature Center amphitheater.

Everyone is invited to come at 6:30 and bring a picnic dinner (in reusable containers) before the show starts at 7 pm. Cost is \$5 for adults, \$3 for children over 5 years.

Hope to see you there!

# Come to the Spring Fling

Please plan to attend this **Spring's Volunteer and Friends Potluck** on Tuesday, June I at 6 pm. We'll relax by the pond as we feast and share with good friends. It won't be the same without you! Just bring your favorite dish (enough for 7 people) and your good nature. Hope to see you there!



## Mark Your Calendar

#### **Spring Potluck**

June 1, 6 to 8:30 pm

## Liars, Thieves and Chocolate Storytelling

June 12, 7:30 pm

#### **Solstice Campfire**

June 19, 7 to 9 pm

#### **Annual Butterfly Count**

June 26, 8 am 12 noon, 12:30 to 3 pm

#### **Campout Cooking Class**

July 10, 7 to 9 pm

#### **Summer Concert Series**

Thursdays in July and August 7 to 8 pm (see article on page 5 for more information))

### Out of the Wilds and Into Your Garden

First Saturday of Each Month, 2 to 4 pm

#### **Artisan Craft Fair**

Fourth Saturday of the Month, 10 am to 2 pm

Visit Long Beach Parks, Recreation and Marine on Facebook and become a Fan!